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SUBJECT: THAI CABINET APPROVES CAMBODIAN MAP OF PREAH
VIHEAR TEMPLE; UNESCO APPLICATION TO PROCEED

1. (SBU) On June 17, the Cabinet approved the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) map of Preah Vihear Temple, following approval by the National Security Council on June 16. MFA Second Secretary Suttamon Wiriyadamrong told us that MFA Deputy Director General Pisanu Suvanajata flew to Phnom Penh on June 17 to receive a joint communique on the temple's disposition from Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An. Pisanu is expected to return to Bangkok on the afternoon of June 18 to present the document for FM Noppadon's signature. The communique will then be returned to Cambodia for Sok An's signature and then forwarded to UNESCO, alongside the map, to finalize Cambodia's application for the temple to receive World Heritage status.

2. (SBU) Reports in the Thai press cited small protests in Bangkok and around the temple site, mainly directed at Cambodian vendors whose presence is seen as an infringement on Thai territory. While asserting the validity of the RGC map, FM Noppadon told reporters that he would continue to press the presence of a Cambodian community in the disputed areas with the RGC after the World Heritage status is finalized. In an effort to demonstrate his confidence that the new map does not include disputed territory within the temple's perimeters, Noppadon promised to resign if any Thai territory is found to be within the temple borders.

3. (SBU) The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) held a demonstration that drew several thousand people to the Foreign Ministry on June 18, demanding that the map and joint communique be made public. PAD members have accused Noppadon of approving the map to further former PM Thaksin's land development project in Cambodia, near the Thai border. The press also reported that Vice Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs M.R. Priyananthana Rangsit asked Noppadon to provide clarification on the case, and pointed out that he could be found guilty of changing Thailand's boundaries without approval of the National Assembly -- an offense that could lead to his impeachment. A Democrat Party (DP) official told us on June 18 that his party believed the agreed-upon map was in some ways inappropriate (NFI), and that the RTG-RGC negotiations on Preah Vihear were influenced by special interests. This official said the DP remained intent on raising Preah Vihear and Noppadon's performance in a no-confidence debate in the House of Representatives.

COMMENT

4. (SBU) While the application for World Heritage status appears set to move forward with the backing of both the RTG and RGC, issues such as Cambodian vendors and unrest near the

temple site, as well as attempts to use the controversy to make domestic political hay, will continue to simmer.
ENTWISTLE